

What is claimed is:

1. A media-distribution-resource management apparatus which is a resource-shared
5 media-distribution-resource management apparatus using a network, comprising:
 - a resource-utilization-information management unit managing shared-resource information about both available network resources and available media
10 -distribution-system resources;
 - a shared-resource management unit distributing or re-distributing the shared resources based on a resource utilization request from each content distributor;
 - a distribution management unit which is provided
15 in each media distribution server and which performs both reservation management and distribution management of media distribution in each of the media distribution servers within a scope of a utilization right distributed or re-distributed by the
20 shared-resource management unit;
 - a distributor management unit managing information about a media distributor that wants to use the shared resources; and
 - a viewer management unit managing information
25 about a viewer.

2. The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to claim 1, wherein

said resource-utilization-information
5 management unit, comprising:

a server-resource management unit managing resource information about a media-distribution server; and

a network-resource management unit managing
10 information about network resources for media distribution.

3. The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, wherein

15 said shared-resource management unit, comprising:

a resource-utilization-information extraction unit extracting available resource information from said resource-utilization -information management
20 unit; and

a shared-resource-availability display unit displaying information about available shared resources for a media distributor;

a resource-utilization-information input unit
25 the media distributor inputting a resource utilization

request;

a shared-resource distribution unit distributing
a utilization right of the shared resource in a specific
time period to said distribution management unit
5 installed in each of the media distributors based on
information that is obtained in each time zone by the
resource-utilization-information extraction unit and
resource-utilization-information input unit;

a shared-resource-utilization amount extraction
10 unit extracting a utilization situation of the shared
resource in a specific time period; and

a shared-resource re-distribution unit
redistributing a utilization right of an unused one of
the shared resources to said distribution management
15 unit based on both the utilization situation and
distribution request in a specific time period extracted
by said distribution management unit.

4. The media-distribution-resource management
20 apparatus according to one of claims 1 through 3, wherein

said distribution management unit, comprising:

an available reservation-candidate display unit
displaying available content candidates to be reserved
within a scope of a utilization right distributed by
25 said shared-resource management unit;

a distribution-reservation input unit making a viewer select at least one content to be distributed out of the displayed candidates;

a distribution-reservation management unit
5 reserving distribution for a viewer based on the selection made by the viewer from the displayed candidates;

a direct viewing reception unit making a viewer candidate without a reservation within a media
10 distribution time;

a shared-resource confirmation unit making an inquiry for said shared-resource management unit about whether an unused one of the shared resources is available, based on the selection made by the viewer
15 from the displayed candidates;

a direct-viewing permitting unit permitting viewing within the media distribution time based on the utilization right re-distributed by said shared-resource management unit; and

20 a distribution-instructing unit instructing the media distribution server to perform media distribution to a viewer that is permitted to receive direct distribution out of both viewers with the reservation of media distribution and viewer candidates without
25 reservations.

5. The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to one of claims 1 through 4, wherein said distributor management unit, comprising:
- 5 a distributor-information input unit making a media distributor that wants to use the shared resource input information about the distributor itself; and
- a distributor authentication unit authenticating the media distributor based on the shared resource input
- 10 information.
6. The media-distribution-resource management apparatus according to one of claims 1 through 5, wherein said viewer management unit, comprising:
- 15 a viewer-information input unit inputting information about a viewer candidate; and
- a viewer authentication unit authenticating the viewer candidate based on the input information.
- 20 7. A computer-readable storage medium which records a program for enabling a computer to perform a function when the program is read by the computer, the function comprising:
- a resource-utilization-information management
- 25 function to manage shared-resource information about

both an available network resource and an available media-distribution-system resource;

5 a shared-resource management function to distribute or re-distribute the shared resource based on a resource-utilization request from each content distributor;

10 a distribution management function which is provided in each media distribution server and which performs both reservation management and distribution management of media distribution for each of the media distribution servers within a scope of a resource-utilization right distributed or re-distributed by the shared-resource management function;

15 a distributor management function to manage information about media distributors that want to use the shared resource;

a viewer management function to manage information about viewers.

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8. A media-distribution-resource management apparatus which is a resource-shared media-distribution-resource management apparatus using a network, comprising:

25 resource-utilization-information management

means for managing shared-resource information about both available network resources and available media-distribution-system resources;

shared-resource management means for
5 distributing or re-distributing the shared resources based on a resource utilization request from each content distributor;

distribution management means which is provided for each media distribution server and which performs
10 both reservation management and distribution management of media distribution for each of the media distribution servers within a scope of a utilization right distributed or re-distributed by the shared-resource management means;

15 distributor management means for managing information about a media distributor that wants to use the shared resources; and

viewer management means managing information about viewers.

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9. A carrier signal which carries to a computer a program for enabling the computer to perform a function when the program is read by the computer, the function comprising:

25 a resource-utilization-information management

function to manage shared-resource information about both an available network resource and an available media-distribution-system resource;

5 a shared-resource management function to distribute or re-distribute the shared resource based on a resource-utilization request from each content distributor;

10 a distribution management function which is provided in each media distribution server and which performs both reservation management and distribution management of media distribution for each of the media distribution servers within a scope of a resource-utilization right distributed or re-distributed by the shared-resource management
15 function;

a distributor management function to manage information about media distributors that want to use the shared resource;

20 a viewer management function to manage information about viewers.